

**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE**

25X1A

12 December 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander Bagley**

**SUBJECT : Characteristics of the South Vietnamese  
Government**

The following comments are responsive to paragraph 2d of your memorandum for [ ] of 28 November 1961. Comments on the remaining inquiries contained in the memorandum are in preparation:

1. According to a study made by USIA in late 1960, the upper class in South Vietnam, composed mainly of the mandarin and land-owning families from the colonial period, together with top civil servants, religious figures and wealthy businessmen, comprises about three percent of the total population. Adding to this a largely urban middle class composed of lower ranking civil servants, school teachers, shop owners and trained workers, some 1,500,000 South Vietnamese, or an estimated 10-12 percent, probably have some useful degree of educational, technical or commercial skill.

2. The professional-intellectual elite, which in South Vietnam consists mainly of lawyers, writers, educators and a small number of scientists and engineers, is now estimated at about 3000-5000, although no recent comprehensive analysis is available. Senior civil servants, numbering about 500, are drawn chiefly from this professional group. According to a recent Embassy survey, there are 628 doctors in South Vietnam, including foreigners. Of this number, 187 are reported to be in government service as civilians, 258 in the military, and 183 in private practice including 63 foreigners. A number of prominent opposition figures in Saigon are physicians.

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3. Figures are not presently available on the number of lawyers in South Vietnam. However, it is probable that they comprise a larger percentage of the intellectual class than doctors and educators, numbering at least 1,000. In the 1960 survey the number of university professors was reported at 366. In addition, there are reported to be 23,000 primary and secondary school teachers. About 1800 South Vietnamese students were reported receiving university training abroad in 1958.

4. On the basis of these estimates, it is difficult to guess the available South Vietnamese leadership not now being tapped. Approximately one-tenth to one-fifth of the intellectual elite is now active in the government. Of the remainder, probably at least half are already employed in activities deemed vital to the national interest. Finally, as many as 45 percent of the professionals outside the government are probably unwilling to serve in the present government.

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